

Teacher Preparation

John wanted his students to understand the problem-solution process through a hands-on activity that would allow them to SEE how the problem-solution process works. John knew that the classroom novel they were reading had a chapter coming up that presented a real problem. The main character was faced with a challenging situation, and John wanted his students to explore all of the possible ways the character could deal with this conflict.

As John was thinking through this lesson, he realized he wanted each student to have an opportunity to reflect on a possible solution to the problem. Also, he wanted the students to share and compare their solutions in groups.

John also decided that a visual would be helpful for students to “see” the solution. He thought through the entire lesson and collected scissors and construction paper for each student.

Activity Starter

After reading the chapter in their novel where the main character faced a crisis situation, John stopped the novel and asked students to close their books. He and the students discussed all the different issues that affected the main character to this point in the story. Then, he asked each student to put themselves in the shoes of the main character and think through a possible solution. He asked the students to think for five minutes before they wrote, and then gave them plenty of time to complete their writing.

After each student was finished, John placed the students in groups of two or three. Each student shared his or her solution with each other. Next, John asked the groups to create a “Thought Bubble Diagram” illustrating all of the ways that they believed the character could solve his/her problem. Students used scissors and construction paper and cut out a series of “thought bubbles.” In each “thought bubble” the students explained a different possible solution to the character's problem. Finally, each group glued all of its “thought bubbles” onto a large piece of construction paper. Once all the groups had completed their diagrams, John had the groups to share with the class.

Now that all the possible solutions had been discussed and visual representations of them had been produced, John asked each student to write down which solution seemed most viable to them and to offer two reasons to support their opinion.

Students couldn't wait to read the next chapter of their novel!